

I am pleased to report that the provision was retained in the conference report which the Congress voted to send to the President for his signature.

In addition to hearings and legislative provisions, I have begun a dialog with numerous personnel within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I would be remiss if I did not mention the many productive conversations I have had with the Under Secretary of Defense, Rudy deLeon. Because Secretary deLeon is relatively new to his position and has little ownership over the flawed decisions of the past, he has been very willing to explore alternative acquisition strategies including the solution I favor: construction of a Government-owned, contractor-operated vaccine production facility. As evidence of his commitment to find a solution, vaccine production was the first topic discussed by the Defense Resources Board, which Secretary deLeon chairs, when it met to begin its preparation of the Defense budget submission for fiscal year 2001.

I have encouraged Secretary deLeon to include \$25 million in the fiscal year 2002 Defense budget submission for R&D, in addition to \$400 million in the next version of the Department's Fiscal Years Development Plan, to cover construction costs. To ensure that funding for this project does not come at the expense of other critically needed bio-defense programs, I will soon meet with the Director of OMB. I am hopeful that I can explore with Mr. Lew ways to increase the top-line of the Defense budget to cover the expense of this project.

For too long DOD has pursued a flawed acquisition strategy that is a disservice to both the American taxpayer and our men and women in uniform. The Department must be weaned from its dependence on the private sector for the provision of critical biological warfare vaccines.

FIREARM HOMICIDES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, last week I submitted a list of some of the high profile shootings that took place over the past two years and the casualties that occurred as a result. That list was long, far too long. The number of shootings, in schools and public places, have claimed the lives of too many Americans, especially our young people.

I believe all of us want to know why children in the United States seem more vulnerable to gun violence than children in other industrialized nations? Some would argue that it is because American children are watching movies and television programs that are disturbingly violent. Some say that our children are lacking in religious influences. Certainly, these may be factors, and we should do everything we can to steer our kids in the right direction, but if we are going to protect children's lives, we must first and foremost limit our children's access to guns.

I have repeatedly made the point that Canadian children, who play the same video games and watch the same movies are much safer than their American counterparts. The reason—Canadian laws successfully limit minors' access to firearms while American laws do not.

How else can one explain that during the year 1999 in Detroit, Michigan there were 337 homicides committed with firearms (Source: Michigan State Police). For the same year, in Windsor, Ontario, a city less than half a mile away from Detroit, there was just a single firearm homicide (Source: Windsor Police Services). In one year, 337 firearm homicides in Detroit versus one in Windsor, even though the children in these cities often listen to the same radio stations and watch the exact same television programs. That is a shocking statistic, one that should jolt this Congress to action. Unfortunately, to my great disappointment, this Congress will adjourn without doing a single thing to protect our children from gun violence in Detroit or anywhere else in America.

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I was absent from the Senate on the morning of Friday, October 27, 2000, during the vote on the motion to proceed to consideration of the conference report accompanying H.R. 2415, which contains the pending bankruptcy reform legislation. I was unable to return to the Senate in time for this unscheduled vote due to a commitment Friday morning in Charleston, West Virginia. Had I been in attendance in the Senate during that vote, I would have voted to proceed to the bankruptcy legislation.

My vote would not have changed the outcome of the vote on the motion to proceed.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

THELMA RIVERS CELEBRATES 115TH BIRTHDAY

• Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I recognize South Carolina's Thelma Frazier Rivers who will celebrate her 115th birthday on Nov. 3. Mrs. Rivers was born in Darlington County in 1885 and now lives in nearby Timmonsville in Florence County. She and her late husband, Horace, had 22 children and many of them, as well as plenty of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, will help her celebrate this remarkable occasion. Throughout her life, Mrs. Rivers has enjoyed working in her yard and serving at her church, Bethlehem Baptist, in Timmonsville. She was blessed with a beautiful singing voice which she has passed down to her children and grandchildren. She also has a flair for any kind of handiwork, including quilting, and she still enjoys sewing. "Everyone in Timmonsville knows

Thelma," one of her daughters explained, and rightly so; Mrs. Thelma Rivers is truly a treasure. My wife, Peatsy, and I wish her continued health and happiness and the most joyful of birthdays.●

TRIBUTE TO KENNERLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

• Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Kennerly Elementary School, in St. Louis, MO. Kennerly is one of nine schools to be named recently to the 2000 National Schools of Character in recognition of its exemplary work to encourage the social, ethical and academic development of its students through character education.

Sponsored by the Character Education Partnership, National Schools of Character is an annual awards program recognizing K-12 schools and districts demonstrating outstanding character education initiatives and yielding positive results in student behavior, school environment, and academic performance. Kennerly exemplifies its school motto "Friends Learning Together" by involving students, teachers, parents, and the community. Included in Kennerly's character education programs are a Character Plus Team, a Character Club, and a Character Cabinet.

As a strong supporter of character education, I am pleased to see that Kennerly's Character Education program has produced great results, both in academics, and in the social climate of the school. Academic performance has increased, and discipline problems have decreased. I have fought to increase the amount of funding available for character education because schools like Kennerly have demonstrated that character education programs increase the value of education for all our children and enhance our communities. It is truly a privilege for students to attend schools like Kennerly.

So, I extend my congratulations to Kennerly Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri, for its outstanding character education programs.●

IN RECOGNITION OF PROJECT ACORN

• Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, I rise today to salute the charitable efforts of Project Acorn, a non-profit organization that works to place and fund children in two-year preschool scholarship programs. What started out as Stuart and Jill Lasser's individual act of kindness has become an expanded effort throughout Morris County and now across New Jersey to help families who cannot afford quality preschool education. The couple's lofty objectives and hard work enabled the organization to flourish over the past five years through partnerships with benefactors, volunteers, and area preschools.